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ORGANIZATION OF THE WORK OF THE SESSION

Note by the secretariat

1. On 12 March 2002, the Chairman of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations of the Economic and Social Council addressed a letter to the Chairperson of the fifty-seventh session of the Commission on Human Rights drawing the attention of the Commission to the actions recommended by the Committee, one of which was the wider dissemination of a message to the NGO community at large, calling for greater vigilance and observance of established procedures on the relationship between non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Council and the United Nations.

2. In a reply to that letter, on 20 March 2002, the Chairperson of the fifty-eight session of the Commission on Human Rights informed the Chairman of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations that the letter from the Committee had been brought to the attention of concerned NGOs and would be circulated with its annex and the reply as an official document of the fifty-eighth session of the Commission under agenda item 3.

3. The letter and the reply are reproduced in the annex to the present document.*

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* Reproduced as received, in the original language only.

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Annex

United Nations Nations Unies

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12 March 2002

Dear Ambassador Despouy,

It was a great pleasure for me to have met you on November 5, 2001 in New York. The Committee on NGOs had its resumed session in January last. At its 2001 regular session, the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations had heard a declaration from the Ambassador from Sri Lanka who deplored that, at the fifty-seventh session of the Commission of Human Rights, members of an organization, whose application for ECOSOC status was not recommended by the Committee, had obtained accreditation from another organization and distributed abusive material regarding his country. In view of the repetition of similar situations, the Permanent representative of Sri Lanka asked the Committee to take proper action on this sensitive issue. Concerns on the same subject were expressed by other delegations.

Having examined the question in depth, the Committee recommended a couple of actions to be taken, one of which is the wider dissemination of a clear message to the NGO community at large, calling for greater vigilance and observance of established procedures on the relationship between non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Council and the United Nations.

To this end, the Committee requested me, as its Chairman, to suggest certain points that could be used by you, the Chairman of the Commission on Human Rights, while bringing the issue to the attention of the NGOs concerned before the sessions of the Commissions of Human Rights. (see Annex 1 attached)

With the help of the Bureau of the CHR and the efficient assistance of the Geneva UN Secretariat, I am confident that these unfortunate incidents will be avoided in the future.

During my chairmanship of the Committee on NGOs, I have greatly enjoyed collaborating with you, for which I am grateful to you.

Accept, Sir, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Levent Bilman, Chairman
Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations

H. E. Mr. Leandro Despouy, Chairman
Commission on Human Rights

Information for NGOs in consultative status with ECOSOC
(for the kind attention of the Chairman of the Commission on Human Rights).

* As of today, over two thousand non-governmental organizations have obtained consultative status with the Economic and Social Council. Recognizing the importance and the deep interest expressed by NGOs to participate in the work of the Council, and with a view to facilitating the fruitful partnership between the United Nations and the NGO community, the Committee of Non-Governmental Organizations expressed, on several occasions, the view that non-governmental organizations should be reminded of the rules and procedures governing these consultative arrangements.

* According to the Article 71 of the United Nations Charter and the provisions of ECOSOC Resolution 1996/31, organizations in consultative status with the United Nations should be guided by the principle that consultative arrangements are to be made, on the one hand, for the purpose of enabling the Council or one of its bodies to secure expert information or advice from organizations having special competence in the subjects for which consultative arrangements are made, and on the other hand, to enable organizations representing the concerns and important elements of public opinion to express their views.

* As a rule, non-governmental organizations, that express the wish to attend United Nations meetings, are accredited for participation and can designate the persons who will represent them at the meetings. However, NGOs and their designated representatives should, at all times, conform to the principles governing the establishment and nature of their consultative status with the Council. An NGO should keep in mind that the representatives it accredits will speak and act, in the United Nations premises, solely on behalf of the organization. Furthermore, oral/written statements by the NGOs, as well as other documentation prepared by them, should be in conformity with the principles enshrined by the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and, the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. Non-governmental organizations will therefore be held responsible for all persons accredited by them, and for the content of their statements/documents, including in cases of misconduct or violations of rules governing NGO participation at UN meetings.

* Pursuant to Part VIII of ECOSOC resolution 1996/31, the consultative status of non-governmental organizations with the Council can be suspended or withdrawn if the organization, " either directly or through its affiliates or representatives acting on its behalf, clearly abuses its status by engaging in a pattern contrary to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations including unsubstantiated or politically motivated acts against Member States of the United Nations incompatible with those purposes and principles". The Committee on NGOs, in the past, had to invoke these provisions, which resulted with either the withdrawal or the suspension of the consultative status of certain NGOs.

* The above procedure have been designed to facilitate the working relationship of non-governmental organizations with the United Nations while accommodating an increasing number of organizations applying for consultative status with the Council.

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20 March 2002

Dear Mr Bilman,

I would like to thank you for your letter of 1 March 2002 addressed to Ambassador Leandro Despouy, outgoing Chairperson of the 57th session of the Commission on Human Rights

I am pleased to inform you that your letter has already been brought to the attention of concerned NGOs and will be circulated with its annex and reply as official document at the 58th session of the Commission under agenda item 3.

I am particularly appreciative of the cooperation between the Committee and the Commission on Human Rights to which I attach the utmost importance.

With kind regards.

Yours sincerely,

Krzysztof Jakubowski
Chairperson,
58th session of the Commission on Human Rights

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Mr. Levent Bilman
Chairman
Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations